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MONTANA STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD

The Montana Archivist

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FALL / WINTER 2002

New Law Affects Local Government Records

Beginning October 1, 2001, a law passed by the 2001 Legislature changed the way local governments may dispose of public records. Under SB443 local officials must provide 180 days notice to interested parties before destroying any records that are 10 years old or older. Notice must be given to the following entities in this order: the Montana Historical Society, the State Archives, Montana public and private universities and colleges, local historical museums, local historical societies, Montana genealogical groups, and the general public. If the records are not claimed within 180 days, they can be destroyed in the normal manner.

The Local Government Records Committee has established an internet list-serve to which interested parties can subscribe. The Records Management Bureau of the Secretary of State's Office will list all records subject to the provisions of the bill on the list-serve. Those wishing to subscribe can do so by sending an email message to: join_recordsdisposal@lists.state.mt.us. To comply with SB443, the Local Government Records Committee has also created a new records disposal form, which is available on the state Records Management Bureau's web page at sos.state.mt.us/css/RMB.

The full text of this bill is included on page 3 of this newsletter. If you have questions or comments regarding the implementation of this bill, its positive or negative impacts, or simply wish to make a statement regarding this law, the SHRAB is interested in hearing your opinions. Please contact Molly Miller, acting State Coordinator, at 444-7482 or momiller@state.mt.us.

SHRAB Board Meets in Helena

The Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board met on October 25, 2001, in Helena in conjunction with the annual Montana History Conference, for the second of it's biannual meetings. Members present were Jodi Allison-Bunnell, Ellen Crain, Kathy Mosdal O'Brien, Kim Allan Scott, and Lory Morrow. Molly Miller, acting State Archivist, also attended the meeting

The Board discussed many issues, beginning with the two vacancies left on the Board by the resignation of Kathryn Otto from the Montana Historical Society and the death of Lenore Red Elk of the Fort Peck Tribal Archives. Prior to her resignation Ms. Otto had appointed Lory Morrow acting state coordinator. In order to meet Board guidelines, which state that the State Archivist is a permanent member of the Board and the state coordinator, Ms. Morrow recommended that Molly Miller, who is serving as acting State Archivist, be appointed to the Board and act as State Coordinator until the new State Archivist is hired. After discussion of possible candidates, the Board unanimously agreed to ask Anne Foster, Director of the Huntley Project Museum of Irrigated Agriculture, to fill the remaining year of Lenore Red Elk's appointment.

The Board also heard reports on several projects and issues concerning records in Montana. The first report was from Ellen Crain regarding the final regrant project of former Traveling Archivist Anne Foster at the Butte-Silver Bow Archives. The Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives used funds remaining from the NHPRC grant to fund Ms Foster's time in July 2001. Ms. Foster worked on processing labor history records, including reporting cataloging to NUCMC's Montana Union List. She also worked on culling non-current, non-permanent records of the government of the city of Butte

A report was also given on the annual SHRAB sponsored workshop held in conjunction with the Montana History Conference. This year's conference was entitled "Collection Care for Library & Archival Materials" and was given by Diana Wilkison, Preservation Librarian for the Montana Historical Society Library. The Board discussed ideas for future workshops, including a how-to workshop for genealogists.

Jodi Allison-Bunnell gave a report on the Northwest Archives Processing Initiative grant that was recently submitted to the NHPRC. This grant was submitted by a consortium of archives in Montana, Washington, and Oregon and will work in conjunction with a grant submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NWAPI grant will address making archival finding aids available online.

The final report, given by Molly Miller, was on the status

Continued on page 4

HOW TO BASICS: Putting Documents on Display*

Exhibits are an educational way to display the unique materials held by archives, libraries, and museums. While exhibits are the primary activity of most museums, archives and libraries can and often do mount exhibits that highlight portions of their collections. Exhibits, however, can compromise the long-term preservation of archival materials. But, by following preservation standards for display, damage caused by exhibits can be minimized.

There are several steps that can be taken to minimize damage. One of the first things to consider is whether a high-quality copy of the original can be used in place of the original document. Laser photocopies have improved in the last several years to the point that many copies are indistinguishable from the original. Color photocopies of photographs are often used, as well. Duplicates made by scanning the original can also be a good alternative.

To minimize damage when the original document must be displayed, the most importance should be given to protecting the documents from light, air, and touching by the public. When designing the exhibit, consider light damage and the type of case or frame to be used.

LIGHT Paper is one of the most light sensitive materials and can be easily damaged by any level of light. Light high in ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause darkening of the paper and/or fading. It can also damage the physical structure of the paper by causing weakening and embrittlement. Although all light is damaging, the higher the levels, the greater the deterioration. Because of the damaging nature of light, conservators recommend that no valuable document be permanently displayed.

Natural light is more damaging than artificial light. To offset the damage, windows in exhibit areas should be covered with blinds, shades, or curtains for as much of the day as possible. In addition, UV filters should be installed on the windows. UV filters are available as plastic sheeting, rigid panels, or film that can be placed over the windows. UV filtered glass can also be used in construction of display cases to further deter the harmful effects of natural light. Rather than natural light, artificial light should be used in exhibits. The best types are incandescent (tungsten) lamps or tungsten-halogen lamps. Tungsten-halogen lamps should be used with UV filters. Additionally, lights should always be turned off when there are no visitors in the exhibit.

CASES Paper materials must always be displayed in something, such as a case or a frame. Properly constructed cases and frames will protect the documents against a variety of airborne contaminants as well as reduce the effects of temperature and humidity fluctuations. Cases should be constructed from materials that do not give off harmful gases. Materials such as wood, wood sealants, paints, adhesives, gasketing materials, and display fabrics can emit harmful gases. If a wood case must be used, it should be lined with a barrier material, such as polyester film (or Mylar), 4-ply 100% ragboard, or polyethylene foam sheeting. Wooden cases can also be sealed with water-born polyurethane (not oil-based) or two-part epoxy sealants. Fabric linings in cases should be of undyed cotton, linen, polyester, or a cotton-polyester blend. To ensure safety, documents should not come in direct contact with the fabric linings.

Five Simple Rules for Display

1. Use copies whenever possible.
2. Do not display a valuable paper artifact permanently.
3. Keep light levels as low as possible.
4. Minimize exposure to ultraviolet light with appropriate filters.
5. Insure that cases and frames are enclosed, sealed, and made of materials that will not damage their contents.

When designing an exhibit, keep in mind that the placement of the item within the display case can also effect the preservation of the document. Paper materials should be placed on ragboard backings. The mount not only adds a barrier between the document and the case, but also provides support for the document if it is moved.

FRAMES Frames can also be used when exhibiting documents. As with cases, stable framing and mounting materials must be used to ensure the safety of the document. UV filtering glazing is essential for displays with frames, in order to protect the item from light exposure. The glazing should not come in direct contact with the object. The mounting materials inside the frame should meet current conservation standards, including use of pH-neutral or buffered mats or mounts. The wood from frames can also cause damage to documents. However, visible damage seems not to occur if the object is placed an inch or more away from the wood.

Exhibits are an excellent way to highlight the unique and significant items found in archival collections. However, institutions must ensure that exhibits are not mounted in a manner that causes additional damage and stress to the documents on display.

**Adapted from the NEDCC's preservation pamphlet "Protecting Paper and Book Collection During Exhibition," by Mary Todd Glaser. Available at http://www.nedcc.org.*

Senate Bill 443

An act requiring that local government public records be offered to certain entities and to the general public before being destroyed; expanding the membership of the local government records committee; and amending section 2-6-402, MCA.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:
Section 1. Destruction of local government public records prohibited prior to offering -- central registry -- notification.
(1) A local government public record more than 10-years old may not be destroyed without it first being offered to the Montana historical society, the state archives, Montana public and private universities and colleges, local historical museums, local historical societies, Montana genealogical groups, and the general public.
(2) The availability of a public record to be destroyed must be noticed to the entities listed in subsection (1) at least 180 days prior to disposal.
(3) (a) Claimed records must be given to entities in the order of priority listed in subsection (1).
(b) All expenses for the removal of claimed records must be paid by the entity claiming the records.
(c) The local government records committee, provided for in 2-6-402, shall establish procedures by which public records must be offered and claimed pursuant to this section.
(d) The local government records committee shall develop and maintain a central registry of the entities identified in subsection (1) who are interested in receiving notice of the potential destruction of public records pursuant to this section. The registry must be constructed to allow a local government entity to notify the local government records committee when the entity intends to destroy documents covered under this section and that allows the local government records committee to subsequently notify the entities in the registry. A local government entity's notice to the local government records committee pursuant to this subsection and the record committee's notice to the entities listed on the registry fulfills the notification requirements of this section.

Section 2. Section 2-6-402, MCA, is amended to read:
"2-6-402. Local government records committee -- creation.
(1) There is a local government records committee.
(2) The committee consists of the following seven eight members:
(a) the state archivist;
(b) the state records manager;
(c) a representative of the department of commerce;
(d) two local records custodians, appointed by the director of the Montana historical society; and
(e) two additional local records custodians, appointed by the secretary of state; and
(f) a citizen representing the Montana state genealogical society, appointed by the secretary of state, who shall serve as a volunteer.
(3) Committee members subject to appointment shall hold office for a period of 2 years beginning on January 1 of the year following their appointment.
(4) Any vacancies must be filled in the same manner that they were filled originally.
(5) The committee shall elect a presiding officer and a vice presiding officer.
(6) The committee shall meet twice a year upon the call of the secretary of state or the presiding officer.
(7) Members Except as provided in subsection (2)(f), members of the committee not serving as part of their compensated government employment must be compensated in accordance with 2-18-501 through 2-18-503 for each day in committee attendance. Members who serve as part of their compensated government employment may not receive additional compensation, but the employing governmental entity shall furnish, in accordance with the prevailing per diem rates, a reasonable allowance for travel and other expenses incurred in attending committee meetings."

Microfilming Project Begins

In November 2001 the Montana Historical Society Archives and the Genealogical Society of Utah began a joint project to microfilm county records throughout the state of Montana. Microfilmers Dee and Regene Israelsen, among others, from the Genealogical Society of Utah will spend the next four to five years visiting the Clerk of District Court and the Clerk and Recorder of each county in Montana and filming their vital records. The records to be microfilmed include birth and death records, probate records, land records, military rolls, naturalization records, school records, and several others types of records as they are available.

The staff of the Montana Historical Society Archives will be coordinating the project, including working with the county clerks. In return for this work, the Society will receive a copy of all of the microfilm produced by the Genealogical Society of Utah. The project began in Lewis and Clark County with great success. Copies of the microfilm will be available for purchase. If you have any questions about the microfilming contact Molly Miller of the MHS Archives, 444-7482.

If you have a news item, announcement, or other information you would like to have published in the *Montana Archivist*, please contact Molly Miller at the Montana Historical Society, 444-7482 or momiller@state.mt.us.

The Montana Archivist

Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board

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News from Around Montana

News from the K. Ross Toole Archives

Staff News

Jodi Allison-Bunnell has returned from maternity leave on a part-time basis. She can be reached at (406) 243-2053 or jbunn@selway.umt.edu.

Collections Processed

J. Neilson Barry Manuscripts (MSS 277) – Collection contains correspondence from 1932-1937 that Barry kept during his research on the Lewis and Clark expedition. Barry was a member of the Trailseekers council, an organization focused on recreating old trails. He kept notes and maps of John Colter, the expedition mapmaker, in addition to gathering information from miners and Nez Perce Indians.

Clarence Strong Papers (MSS 105) – This collection contains diaries describing 27 years of daily Forest Service work as well as personal and environmental concerns and his stint in Afghanistan as an agriculture advisor.

H. David Cogley Vietnam Collection (MSS 319) – Cogley, a Montana native, was stationed in Viet Nam for a year. This collection includes a written reminiscence and a microfilm copy of a scrapbook that records parts of Cogley's Viet Nam experience.

News from Montana Historical Society Archives & Photograph Archives

Staff News

Kathryn Otto, State Archivist, resigned her position in early October to accept a position as Head of Reference at the Minnesota Historical Society. Molly Miller will be serving as acting State Archivist until the position is filled.

Collections Processed

Warren McGee Collection In 1997, Warren McGee and his late wife, Bernice, of Livingston, Montana, donated to the Montana Historical Society nearly 40,000 photographic images: black and white prints and negatives; color slides; color prints; and color negatives. With financial support from the Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association and the Montana History Foundation, the Society hired Jennifer Thompson to organize and process this collection.

Korean War Oral History Project Contract Oral Historian Suzanne Julin conducted 25 interviews with Korean War Veterans and their spouses from across the state. The project is a joint project of the Montana Oral History Association and the Montana Historical Society and is funded by a Cultural and Aesthetic Grant from the 2001 Legislature. The project, which is now complete, focuses on the military and home front experiences of Montanans from the beginning of the Korean War through post-armistice peace keeping actions. Additional interviews will be conducted over the next two years.

SHRAB Meeting (cont. from p1)

of the implementation of Senate Bill 443, which was passed by the 2001 Legislature. Members of the board discussed taking a more pro-active role in future records-related legislation.

The final item discussed by the Board was its immediate future. The Board discussed sponsoring new collaborative projects focusing on Native American archives. Members also discussed whether to become involved in the shared cataloging project sponsored by the State Library. A decision was made to continue support for the Montana Union List sponsored by NUCMC. The Board decided to table all major projects until the State Archivist position, which is also the state coordinator for the SHRAB, is filled permanently and to concentrate on existing projects. The next meeting of the SHRAB will be held in the spring of 2002.